HALLÉ

THOMAS ADÈS:
SHANTY | DAWN | TOWER – FOR FRANK GEHRY | AQUIFER

OLIVER LEITH: CARTOON SUN

WILLIAM MARSEY: MAN WITH LIMP WRIST

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS ADÈS

THOMAS ADÈS (b. 1971)

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WILLIAM MARSEY (b. 1989)

MAN WITH LIMP WRIST

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THOMAS ADÈS

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CARTOON SUN

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TOTAL TIMING 68.20

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Described by the *New York Times* as 'one of the most accomplished and complete musicians of his generation', composer, conductor and pianist Thomas Adès has history with the Hallé. In the 1990s, as the orchestra's Composer-in-Association, Adès was commissioned to write *The Origin of the Harp* (1994) and *These Premises Are Alarmed* – the latter celebrating the opening of Manchester's Bridgewater Hall in 1996. Several decades later, beginning in autumn 2023, Adès returned to the orchestra for two seasons as Artist-in-Residence, a relationship captured on this recording.

This album presents a survey of Adès' own recent works for orchestra – including the first recording of *Aquifer* (2024) – and showcases music from Oliver Leith and William Marsey, two younger British composers who Adès has championed. Leith's *Cartoon Sun* was commissioned by the Hallé at Adès' request, while *Man with Limp Wrist* was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and both works were premiered by the Hallé.

THOMAS ADÈS
© Alex Burns, the Hallé

THOMAS ADÈS (b. 1971)
SHANTY – OVER THE SEA (2020)

This work was commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Münchener Kammerorchester, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Amsterdam Sinfonietta (supported by The Eduard van Beinum Foundation), Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Kammerorchester Basel with Gstaad Menuhin Festival & Academy, Istanbul Music Festival and Barbican Centre with Britten Sinfonia. Its world premiere performance was given by the Australian Chamber Orchestra at Wollongong Town Hall in February 2021.

A shanty is a song with many verses that is sung by a group of sailors at work. Along with any folk song in the English-language traditions, a shanty creates depth through repetition of the melody and variation of the story. The melody is sung many times, never quite the same, with a strong rhythmic pulse but not necessarily literal unanimity.

In a shanty, the cyclical verses build a story of the harsh, mechanical routine of the petty captain's rule, and accumulate a longing for mutiny. As in a slave spiritual, there is an implied yearning for liberation, freedom from the false, arbitrary regime and a dream of a safe harbour beyond.

In this shanty, fifteen individual voices, sometimes together and sometimes divergent, create a widening seascape. *Shanty* is written for the musicians of the orchestras who play it.

© Thomas Adès

THOMAS ADÈS
DAWN – CHACONY FOR ORCHESTRA AT ANY DISTANCE (2020)

Due to the uncertainty around the number of players permitted at the time of the work's commissioning and first performance, *Dawn* is designed to work with an orchestra of flexible size and with players placed around the hall in anyway. Its first performance was given by the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle.

Adès wrote *Dawn* for the 2020 BBC Proms – for a concert that had to be given under pandemic conditions, with the orchestral players well separated. He calls it a 'chacony', using Purcell's term for a composition based on a repeating bass and more commonly known nowadays as a 'chaconne' or 'passacaglia'. Beginning on middle C, the line steps mellifluously down and returns; it is a wheel revolving almost to the end, passed from harp to piano to gongs, where it settles.

With only tiny exceptions, everything could be played on the white notes of the piano, but these white notes are coloured by melodies and conversations moving through the orchestra. One might feel at the end the sun rising, but in the composer's mind 'the sunrise is imagined as a constant event that moves continuously around the world'.

It may be no coincidence that his mother's first name is Dawn.

© Paul Griffiths, 2025

WILLIAM MARSEY (b. 1989)
MAN WITH LIMP WRIST (2023)

In eight scenes:
Ghost Story
Bar Boy
The Texter
The After-Party
Family Photo
The Reader
Three Friends
Man with Limp Wrist

This work was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2019. The world premiere was given by the Hallé in October 2023, conducted by Thomas Adès.

The title for this piece comes from a 2019 oil painting by Salman Toor. It's a tall, thin canvas, a whole-body portrait of a naked man in introspection. The painting has always struck me as unusual. Toor's work of that time usually features characters in the midst of dynamic, domestic scenes, his distinctive protagonists (ciphers for the painter himself) finding themselves in quiet moments at crowded bars, at parties with friends, enjoying quiet reveries in the glow of a smartphone. The central character of *Man with Limp Wrist* however is a single, posed figure, standing alone against a grey wall, one arm raised with a dangling hand, his gaze averted.

Toor's style inspires the whole set as well as the eponymous final movement. The preceding seven parts of this piece concentrate on other paintings by the artist, each describing single fleeting moods or scenes, domestic settings. And as Toor references the Old Masters in his composition and subject matter, so does my music navigate historical foundations, drawing upon melodies and harmonies from centuries-old hymns, breaking down and reassembling them into fragments that repeat, meditate and unravel.

As I whittle away at these old songs to make something new, their remnants spread throughout my work in a tangled web of musical inheritance. Their rigid stanza structures collide and interfere with their new forms. In *Ghost Story*, parts of a Bach Passion hymn drift forwards calmly before taking abrupt, startled leaps. The tune in *Bar Boy* loops and drunkenly scrambles over its accompaniment, while *Family Photo* weaves its disparately sourced melodies and bass lines into a new, harmonious whole.

William Marsey © 2025

Salman Toor *Man with Limp Wrist*, 2019
Oil on panel, 30 x 12 inches (75 x 31 cm). Original in colour. © Salman Toor; Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York, and Thomas Dane Gallery

THOMAS ADÈS
TOWER – FOR FRANK GEHRY (2021)

Tower – for Frank Gehry) is a 2 and a half minute fanfare, scored for 14 trumpets. Commissioned by André Hoffmann, it was premiered in 2021 under the direction of conductor Ilan Volkov.

Written for the opening of a new artistic hub building designed by Pritzker Architecture Prize-winning architect Frank Gehry, the *Tower* of the title is a stainless steel-clad cultural building, the centrepiece of the Luma Arles arts centre in Southern France. According to Gehry, the design references Arles' Roman architecture, nearby mountains and Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night*, which was painted nearby.

The 56-metre-high arts tower contains the exhibition galleries, archives, a library, offices, seminar rooms and a cafe. Clad with 11,000 irregularly arranged stainless steel panels, the distinctive tower was designed to become a local landmark. One of the world's leading architects, Gehry's is best-known for the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

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OLIVER LEITH
CARTOON SUN (2024)

Bell cannon fantasy
Pin flare
Gold billow blow

The world premiere performance of *Cartoon Sun* was given by the Hallé on 6 April 2024 at The Bridgewater Hall. Following a request by Thomas Adès, the Hallé Concerts Society made the commission, with grateful thanks to CMS whose sponsorship supports new works.

Oliver Leith describes *Cartoon Sun*: 'Everything looks different in the sun. Here, I think of cartoonish wide crude rays with blotted edges. I think of a simplified complex thing. Involuntary feelings of jubilation – smiles you don't want to crack – involuntary happiness of the sun and of bells – every feeling at once. Like the sun, the pealing of bells fills the air with a similar golden thickness or heaviness. Imagine being in a room with no windows and someone shooting a cannonball through the wall, a solid edged beam of gold appears through huge force. Dangerous, very present beauty and extremity. Bright twisted metal of brass and bells and strings. Large bells toll sadness and festivals, small bells buzz horses or dances. The brightest of lights and sounds. Sounds so intensely full or loud that they feel that they may punch through ears and glass but instead transcend that, go past into magical threshold. The satisfaction of hitting something brittle with a hammer and the crack never stopping. Great upsetting cracks in the ground revealing yellow smiling glee.'

Oliver Leith © 2024

THOMAS ADÈS

AQUIFER (2024)

Commissioned by the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks for Sir Simon Rattle's inaugural season as Chief Conductor, with support from Carnegie Hall and the Gesellschafft der Musikfreunde in Wien, Aquifer was premiered in Munich in March 2024.

An aquifer is a geological structure which can transmit water. This work is a musical structure in one movement, requiring seven sections. In the first section, beginning with an introduction in which the material wells up from the deepest notes, the theme is presented first by the flutes and then builds to three statements in all, using more and more of the orchestra. After a breakdown, the slower second section presents the theme again but with more unstable rhythm and harmony. There follows a slow section with a crawling chromatic bass line. This culminates in an acceleration into the fast-flowing fourth section, which in turn slows to a mysterious stillness. From there the fifth section builds with all elements gradually combining towards a return to the opening material, which again breaks down to a darker slow section with dragging movement, from which the music escapes into a reprise of the fast-flowing fourth section, this time culminating in an ecstatic coda.

© Thomas Adès

THOMAS ADÈS CBE (b. 1971) is a composer, pianist and conductor who was born in London. His compositions include three operas: he conducted the premiere of *The Exterminating Angel* at the 2016 Salzburg Festival and subsequently at the Metropolitan Opera, New York and the Royal Opera House, London, as well as a new production in spring 2024 at the Opéra Bastille in Paris; he conducted the premiere and revival of *The Tempest* at the Royal Opera House, a new production at The Metropolitan Opera, Wiener Staatsoper and in November 2022 at La Scala, Milan; and he led the world premiere of his full-evening ballet *The Dante Project* at Covent Garden, going on to conduct it in May 2023 at the Opéra Garnier, Paris.

He frequently leads performances of his orchestral works *Asyla* (1997), *Tevot* (2007), *Polaris* (2010), *Concentric Paths* (2005) and *In Seven Days* (2008), as well as *Totentanz* for mezzo-soprano, baritone and orchestra (2013) and Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (2019). Other recent works include *Dawn – a chacony for orchestra at any distance* (2020), *Shanty – Over the Sea* for strings (2020) and *Märchentänze* for solo violin and piano with orchestra (2021). *Air – Homage to Sibelius* for violin and orchestra, a Roche commission for Anne-Sophie Mutter, was premiered at the 2022 Lucerne Festival where Thomas was Composer-in-Residence.

October 2024 saw Thomas Adès conduct the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra, as part of his two-season residency. Elsewhere, as conductor, Thomas appears regularly with the Los Angeles, Berlin, New York, Vienna, Czech and London Philharmonic orchestras, the BBC, City of Birmingham, Finnish Radio, Boston, Toronto and Chicago Symphony orchestras, Royal Concertgebouw, and Orchestra of Santa Cecilia, Rome and the Hallé.

In opera, he has conducted *The Rake's Progress* at the Royal Opera House and Zürich Opera, and the premieres of three operas by Gerald Barry, including the Los Angeles world premieres of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, of which he also gave the European premiere at Covent Garden.

The world premiere recording of Adès' *Dante* from Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic won the Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance in 2024. The 2009 CD recording of *The Tempest* from the Royal Opera House won the Contemporary category in the *Gramophone* Awards, while the 2013 DVD of the opera's New York Met production won a Diapason d'Or de l'année, as well as Best Opera recording in the Grammy Awards and Music DVD Recording of the Year in the ECHO Klassik Awards.

In September 2024, Thomas received the Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal, presented live onstage at the BBC Proms by Sir Simon Rattle, and in 2023 Thomas was awarded the BBVA Foundation 'Frontiers of Knowledge' prize.

Photograph © Marco Borggreve

WILLIAM MARSEY (b. 1989) is a composer whose music explores memory and identity, shaping a modern voice through engagement with tradition. His work has been described as 'delicate and intricate' (*The Telegraph*), and 'distinctive, and strangely touching' (*The Times*), balancing 'great contrapuntal complexity and interest' with 'emotion and expressiveness' (*The Arts Desk*).

Born in Hartlepool, County Durham, William Marsey studied composition at the University of Cambridge, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Marsey's body of work spans orchestral, chamber and vocal pieces, as well as interdisciplinary collaborations and music for film. His orchestral works include: *Man with Limp Wrist* (2023), commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and premiered by the Hallé, the Ivors Classical Award-nominated *Why Do You Grieve* (2022), and *The Sea* (2019) for the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Lars Vogt. His piano pieces, including the British Composer Award-nominated *Belmont Chill* from *Dutch Indoor subjects*, have been played around the UK, USA and Canada by pianists including Joseph Havlat, George Fu, Richard Uttley, Katherine Chi and Thomas Adès.

He has worked with conductors and soloists including Oliver Knussen, Lawrence Power, Charlotte Saluste-Bridoux and Liam Byrne. His interdisciplinary projects span multiple art forms, including work with choreographer Hofesh Shechter, filmmaker Antonia Luxem and photographer Torbjørn Rødland. Recently, he orchestrated for the A24 film *Babygirl*, and his music for Anna Ridler's video installation *Circadian Nocturne* (2023) has been exhibited in Times Square New York, Noor Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) and LLUM Barcelona (Spain).

William Marsey has released two albums of his own work, *Dutch Indoor Subjects* and *The Patronages*. His *Be nice to see you*, featuring recordings of his parents' voices – 'an intriguing yet strange work, and somewhat disturbing' (*Planet Hugill*) – can be found on the Solem Quartet's *The Four Quarters* album, alongside music by Thomas Adès, Florence Price and Cassandra Miller.

His orchestral piece *Why do You Grieve* was released on *Live at the Science Museum* on the Platoon label in 2023, and his 'hypnotic and unmoved' (*BBC Music Magazine*) setting of words from the 2014 Immigration Bill, *Removal and Other Powers*, was featured on the song album *Our Indifferent Century* alongside works by Joanna Ward, Gerald Finzi and Benjamin Britten.

Photograph © Matthew Johnson

OLIVER LEITH (b. 1990) is a London-based composer making acoustic music, electronic music and video. His works have appeared at the BBC Proms, Tanglewood Music Centre, Wigmore Hall, Aix Festival, Transit Festival, Darmstädter Ferienkurse, Heidelberg Festival, Riga's White Night Festival and Liszt Academy (Budapest). Accolades include an Ivor Novello award (2020), British Composer Award (2016) and a Royal Philharmonic Society Composition prize (2014).

Oliver Leith's role as the Guildhall School of Music and Drama's Doctoral Composer-in-Residence at the Royal Opera House led to the creation of his acclaimed debut chamber opera *Last Days*. Premiered at the Royal Opera House's Linbury Theatre in 2022 with a sold-out run of performances, it received its US premiere from the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Thomas Adès in February 2024 at Walt Disney Hall. The world premiere recording, with 12 Ensemble, GBSR Duo and conductor Jack Sheen, was released by Platoon in 2024.

2024 saw the premiere of *Cartoon Sun* (featured on this recording) and *Doom and the Dooms* for electric guitar, keyboard, percussion and strings for Sean Shibe, GBSR Duo and 12 Ensemble. *will o wisp*, a 19-minute work for strings, co-commissioned by Manchester Collective and Det Norske Kammerorkester and funded by the British Council's International Collaboration Grants, was premiered in 2022.

Other orchestral works include *Taxa* (composed in 2013 and subsequently performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Ilan Volkov) and *Dream Horse* for soprano, bass and chamber orchestra (commissioned by the 2018 Tanglewood Festival, conducted by Thomas Adès). In 2016–17 members of the London Symphony Orchestra premiered *664 love songs to cure heartache* and *Sexton Blakes*, both for instrumental ensembles and video.

Balloon, for an ensemble of nine players, was premiered in 2018 by the London Sinfonietta and features on an all-Leith release from Another Timbre. *good day good day bad day bad day* (2018), a 45-minute work for keyboards and percussion composed for George Barton and Siwan Rhys, is also available on Another Timbre. Other recordings include: *Hand Coloured* with Loré Lixenberg and the London Sinfonietta (NMC); Aisha Orazbayeva playing *Blurry Wake Song* (SN Variations); and *Uh huh, Yeah* with the Hermes Experiment (Delphian). The Ruisi Quartet featured Leith's string quartet *The big house* on their eponymous album from Pentatone in 2023. Ben Goldscheider and Richard Uttley premiered *Eeyore* for horn and piano at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in November 2024; it toured California as part of the Camerata Pacifica recital series in spring 2025.

Photograph © Anton Lukoszevieze

Thomas Adès conducting the Hallé in The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, 21 November 2024 © David Hughes, The Hallé.

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Jan Bradley
Emma Crossley

HARP
Marie Leenhardt

PIANO/CELESTE
Gemma Beeson

CIMBALOM
Ed Cervenka

All tracks pub. Faber Music (except Man with Limp Wrist)

Producers: Jeremy Hayes/Steve Portnoi
Producer (Aquifer and Cartoon Sun): Steve Portnoi
Balance engineer and mastering: Steve Portnoi:
Assistant engineers: Niall Gault and Edward Cittanova
Recorded 20–24 November 2024
in The Bridgewater Hall and Hallé St Peter's, Manchester, UK

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